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THE JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW

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DAVID LEVI, POET AND PATRIOT.

IT would lead me too far afield to confute the untruthful taunt that the modern Jew is incapable of patriotism, that he is a degenerate, and concentrates in himself all the faults of degeneracy. Still, it often happens that one human being may so focus in himself all qualities as by his life and his example to disprove the charges brought against his class. And such a man lives to-day, in the Italian city of Turin, in the shape of David Levi, poet and patriot; a man who, like Robert Browning, may boast that he "was ever a fighter," and who, even in his old age, still champions the rights of his double fatherland, Italy and Zion; a man who has fought and suffered for his country and his faith; a truly venerable and estimable figure, too little known even by the present generation of Italians, and far too much ignored outside the confines of the Peninsula, although he is a man of whom Israel may well be proud; and though she may have her quiver full of men with whom she may justly plume herself, every new star added to her diadem of glory and martyrdom adds new strength to her ancient grandeur.

It is rare to meet with a life and career so homogeneous as that of David Levi. It presents itself to us as a unity in which every act corresponds to every written word, and every spoken word to every action. This heroic figure was

born at Chieri, a little town not far from Turin, in the year 1816, of an opulent and eminently worthy Hebrew family, who had been the first to introduce the cotton industry into Piedmont, in return for which the Government had accorded to them many privileges and concessions, so that they enjoyed an excellent social position. The grandfather, David, had been the representative of the Piedmontese Jews at the great Synhedrion called to Paris by Napoleon I, and during the French occupation of Italy had held the post of mayor of Chieri. The family life was of the good old patriarchal kind, in which there reigned respect for social and religious tradition, and in which feasts and fasts were observed with all due veneration. The younger David's mother above all was a woman who combined in herself all the Hebrew female virtues, and it was at her knee that her son learnt his first lessons in religion, led by her hand that he first entered into the homes of the poor, and learnt to relieve their misery. He was a high-spirited lad, whose mad tricks had earned for him the name of "Little Demon," but though others could not manage him, he obeyed his mother's look or word. Those were the times when in Piedmont the public schools were closed to all non-Catholics, and hence David received his early instruction from a rabbi who conducted a small private school. This school could not hold him long. His lively temperament, and his innate detestation of all tyranny, brought him into conflict with his stern and rather brutal master, and his parents saw themselves obliged to withdraw him from the rabbi's care, and to confide him to private teachers, but what knowledge these could supply did not suffice to satisfy his hot thirst for learning. Fortunately the family library was well stocked, and fortunately also for him the Levi house was the centre of a small intellectual coterie, who would meet there at stated intervals to discuss current events, literary and political, as well as the inner affairs of the synagogue. These were bad days for the Jews in Piedmont, for the reaction that had followed the events of 1815,

and had abrogated the Code of Napoleon, with its religious equality, had taken a crude and pedantic form in that kingdom, reviving all the mediaeval prejudices of rank and class-spirit and clerical obscurantism. The conversation of the Levis' guests was calculated to awaken reflection in the mind of a naturally thoughtful youth, and already, as a mere boy, there was evoked in David Levi the conviction that the troubles of his co-religionists and those of his fatherland flowed from the same source, and thus, with natural hatred against tyranny, there sprang up in his heart a twofold love for Israel and Italy, which was destined to affect his whole life, career, and labours.

It was after little David had attained his thirteenth year, and had read his portion of the Thora in the synagogue, that he was sent to Vercelli to complete his education. At Vercelli there reigned a more modern spirit than at the school in Chieri. It was while here that David wrote his first Hebrew poem, an elegy on the death of his grandfather, and his first Italian poem, a glorification of a young man condemned to death on account of his revolutionary ideas. The aspirations of young Italy, as they were then preached by men like Mazzini, Berchet, and others, were beginning to ferment throughout the Peninsula; no wonder then that even unripe schoolboys were affected thereby. And in David Levi the soil was already prepared to accept the new ideas with enthusiasm. He tells how one memorable day in his school-life there arrived at Vercelli from France a Piedmontese lad, from whom the police had taken at the frontier all his books and papers; what they could not take from him, however, were the poems of Giovanni Berchet, which the young man had learnt by heart; these he repeated to an eager crowd of boys who gathered around him, caught them up, copied them, committed them to memory, and diffused them among their relatives and friends, and no one listened more attentively than the fourteen-year-old David. Later on these recitations also included the tragedies of Niccolini, the writings of Silvio

Pellico and Mazzoni, all calculated to inflame the fantasy of the boy, and to fan to fiery excitement his own enthusiasm for the unity of Italy, an enthusiasm which, at that time, was already secretly pervading all classes of the inhabitants of the Peninsula. It was while at Vercelli, too, that there fell into the hands of David Levi, for the first time, the works of Giordano Bruno. The character and mental temperament of the great thinker and martyr of Nola was specially calculated to appeal to Levi's nature, and the influence of this study was of life-long duration, making itself manifest, while quite a young man, in a series of articles he wrote for an Italian newspaper, and culminating, in his maturer years, in his great work on Giordano Bruno, which embodies all the results of his studies and researches.

After three such fecund years spent at Vercelli, Levi returned to Chieri at the desire of his parents, who wished that he should enter into the family business. And he duly entered it, but his thoughts and interests were elsewhere. The mysteries of debit and credit had no charms for him, his strong bent was towards poetry, his restless and unquiet spirit led him in search of the higher culture, he longed to help on the emancipation of his countrymen from the foreign yoke. When he found that he could bear the confinement of office life no longer, and that his prayers to be absolved from the family career were all in vain, he one day secretly fled from home, much to the consternation of his parents. He did not long leave them in anxiety, a letter speedily arrived, in which he not only confessed his sin, but also his inability, his inaptitude, to bow to the mechanical career they had chosen for him. His parents wisely recognized that it would be useless to thwart so marked a bent, and consented to his request that he might attend a University, making it a condition, however, that he should fit himself to be a lawyer. To this Levi gratefully consented, and set out for Parma, the University of Turin being closed to him on account of his Hebrew birth.

But Parma did not hold him long, he sighed for Tuscany, where at this epoch there reigned a more genial spirit, and which by tradition was cultured and classic.

To Pisa, in 1836, he turned his steps, and he might have completed his studies there had he not become involved in a duel with a young Swiss, who publicly insulted the Jews. On this account Levi challenged him, and wounded him so severely that he had to fly from the city, and find his way home to Chieri, with the help of friends, who passed on to him their passports. A year afterwards he resumed his studies at Siena. All this while, though nominally studying arid and dry-as-dust law-books, he was browsing with keen ardour among all the works that dealt with the higher problems of life and creation. The everlasting riddles of life and death tormented his brain, and already as a student, found vent in many a poetic utterance. The origin of religions especially attracted him ; he searched his own Scriptures, the Vedas, the Ramayana, the works of Zoroaster and Confucius for the key to life's mystery, and the more he read the more he learned to understand and appreciate anew the belief of his own forefathers. With ever-growing love for his fatherland was coupled an ever-increasing love and respect for Judaism ; his study of the history of Israel caused him to see a certain parallel between the futures of Italy and those of Palestine, and the misfortunes of both awoke a deep echo in his nature.

The child of two Zions in exile I wander,
I look on both Zions and mournfully ponder,
Night, silence, and squalor, alone meet my eyes,
For Jordan, slow, sad, through his grey valley creeping,
Moans out as he goes only "Sorrow and weeping,"
And "Terror" the wave of the Tiber replies.

But David Levi was not made of the stuff that spends its strength in fruitless lamentations and poetical sentimentalities. He wished to act as well as to inspire, he would be a factor in the march of events. Manzoni's gentle resignation was not to his mind, his heroes were rather Mazzini

and Berchet, those mighty voices which were making themselves heard from across the Alps, and admonishing young Italy to awake from its century-long slumber.

As he once expressed it, "Manzoni's hymns were fitted to educate a nation of seminarists, Berchet's songs created a nation of heroes."

Levi's views of life, and his principles at this epoch, are best described in his own words, as written in a species of autobiography, called *Vita di Pensiero*, published in 1875:—

Those who observe the Piedmont of 1873 can with difficulty form an idea of what that province was before the great liberal movement of 1848. It was pervaded with a closeness that asphyxiated every breath of life. It was in fact the Middle Ages—not brave, honourable, and chivalrous, full of power and youth amid all its errors, but stupid, senile, frozen, powdered, bewigged. After fifteen years of a Jesuitical reign, Carlo Alberto at last comprehended this, and aroused by the clamour that awoke on every side, began cautiously to concede a few necessary reforms. Meanwhile the times were growing stormy; the Piedmontese people, young, clear-headed, bold, and conscientious, felt that they might accomplish some higher act before they perished beneath the weight of big hats and powdered wigs, and that they were called upon to open a way for other things. One fine day they rose, shook off their fetters, put to flight Jesuits, friars, rancid and corrupt police crows, big-wigs, resuscitated aristocrats, and opened a path to the throne. And once there they proudly confronted the monarch with this dilemma, to live with popular liberty, or to go. The monarch preferred to live with the liberty and to remain, and not only did they remain, but they gained, into the bargain, Italy, glory, and the gratitude of the people.

Now before this epoch, the beginning of the new era, Piedmont was divided not only into classes, but almost into castes. An iron barrier separated the aristocracy from the bourgeoisie, the middle class from the workman and the peasant, the soldier from the citizen, the clergy from the laity, the Catholic from the Protestant and from the Hebrew. To excite rancour, to feed fierce superstitions and ferocious hatred, to divide, in order to reign with greater security, appeared to be the secret of the state. Woe to them on the day when all should join hands, recognize their equality, and, united, strike for justice and liberty to be enjoyed by all. They would be lost. Therefore they strove to keep the classes apart, divided like

Hindu castes, where each had their own statutes, privileges, prohibitions, proscriptions, and prescriptions. The heretic, the Protestant, the Jew, in this promised land of Holy Church was under the ban of society, was exposed to insult. He was not denied bread and water, like the excommunicate of the Middle Ages, but land to own and cultivate, civil rights, instruction, the schools were prohibited to him. He was betrayed through his family, his wife, his children. Of this nature was respect for the family professed by these sentinels of order. As a child born of a family proud of old and exalted traditions, of great wealth and high character, I felt my blood boil at such an accumulation of injustice. When still a lad I bent my whole mind and every power of my soul to fight, to combat, to struggle, and rebel against destiny. All peaceful reform seemed to me an impossible and derisive dream. Conspiracy seemed to me the holiest of rights, in revolution there was safety. Wounded in the most sacred affections and rights, in honour, in conscience, in the family, everything appeared permissible that reacted against the oppression so disloyal, undeserved, and infamous. Gazing around I perceived that we, the oppressed, were worth more than our numerous oppressors. In despised and isolated abodes there dwelt domestic virtues, religious reverence for age, respect for women, for the mother, considered always as the light-bearer of the house. *There* were found honesty and nobility of character, elsewhere unknown or rare; *there* were hidden treasures of industry; *there* was a love of knowledge, of culture, of letters, qualities which might have been sought in vain among the dominant classes¹. Among vigorous races, the individual scorned, oppressed, may yield to brute force, and to numbers, but in solitude he rises, and wrapped like Queritus in the folds of his mantle, enclosed in his stoical dignity, he is free in thought, in labour, in his family; and the scorn of the mob, patrician or plebeian, renders him greater in his own eyes. Against this rock the darts of the adversary are broken. This is the casket in which the family is preserved, the mould in which character is cast.

Such was the Hebrew—scorned and weak to all exterior appearance, but great and unconquerable in the bosom of his family, unconquerable in thought, unattainable in the depth of his conscience. Inferior races, unpossessed of high ideals, succumb—trodden under foot, absorbed by strains more numerous and more valiant in the battle of life, they yield to the stronger species, but those who keep alive in the abysses of servitude; the love of labour, of family,

¹ For a picture of life among the Piedmontese nobility see Alfieri's *Memoirs*.

of science, may fall vanquished, overpowered, scourged, derided, but is never destroyed. Superior to the common herd, these people outlive the rest, because in them there is the principle of higher evolution, in them reside the germs of moral force ever ready to arouse and resuscitate the race.

Moral power, concentrated in an individual, in the heart of a conquered people, is the secret of its duration, the germ of resurrection. This is the arm with which is initiated a silent, ceaseless struggle that is the true holy war. Such was the arm with which the philosophy and art of Greece ended by subduing the hard Latin roughness, with which Athens overpowered Rome, little Jerusalem conquered pagan society, Christianity vanquished the barbarians. With this the principles of the French and American revolutions conquered the brutality of the Middle Ages. In the weak one, who has on his side justice, morality, and an ideal, dwells and ferments durable and fertile strength.

And in me this angry and vulgar persecution, this growing violence of brutality, against one of the most ancient races of the world excited a more lively sentiment in favour of the liberties of Italy, and kindled a more intense love for her. Without entirely sharing the opinions of my co-religionists, professing, on the contrary, liberty of thought, I nevertheless felt that honour, duty, persecution attached me to them. It was better to be with the unjustly oppressed than with the oppressors, and the emancipation of the Hebrew appeared to me no isolated question, but as the knot of the weightiest political, economical, and social questions which agitated the period, the thermometer of the civilization to which a people had attained in the present, the symbol and synthesis which contained within itself the most arduous question of the religious future of the peoples of the earth.

Such was the profession of faith of this Hebrew youth, who, in place of self-absorption, reached out from the depth of oppression in which he found his own people to the emancipation of the whole human race, and, according to his method of regarding the question, the first thing was to get a free Italy. Hence David Levi became a very apostle of conspiracy, a link, a mouthpiece, a telephone. From Siena, the very centre of Italy, ere he was twenty years old, he joined Mazzini's secret society of *Giovane Italia*, and corresponded with a legion of young and aspiring spirits, who were making straight the paths of the new generation. He

was in turn conspirator, soldier, volunteer, journalist, poet ; but despite his enthusiasm, he never lost the clear insight as to actual things that so markedly pertains to his race.

In 1841, David Levi returned to his native Piedmont, but he could not live in that heavy atmosphere of oppression and hypocrisy, he could not feel himself happy under the weight of that triple tyranny of Jesuitism, aristocracy, and militarism. He longed to go to Paris, at that time the headquarters of Italian patriots, the centre to which the eyes of all oppressed peoples were turned. His good economic position putting no obstacles in the way of any desires, he was able to gratify his wish, and was soon welcomed by his compatriots at the French capital as a valuable co-worker in the sacred cause of liberty. Here he made personal acquaintance with Mazzini, who often came thither from London ; here he made friends with Terenzio Marinani, Giuseppe La Farina, Giovanni Berchet, and with Giorgio Pallavicino and the *élite* of the Italian exiles. A Piedmontese, French was already almost his native speech, and he soon mastered it well enough to collaborate in French newspapers, advocating openly the cause of his oppressed country, as he advocated it secretly in the numberless pamphlets and broadsheets, printed by private printing presses, and dispersed broadcast throughout the Peninsula. Levi was a party in the foolhardy plot, arranged with the two brothers Bandiera, sons of Admiral Bandiera, an Italian in the service of the Austrian navy, in which there was much disaffection. It was hoped that in this way an uprising could be effected, it being believed that Italy was ready to strike the first blow for freedom. Levi was charged to return to Piedmont, and to proceed thence to Venice, inflaming the spirits of his compatriots and helping on the course of events. Alas ! there had been traitors in the camp. The conspiracy was divulged, the two noble, patriotic youths were betrayed to the police, tried for high treason, and shot at Cosenza in 1844.

When Levi heard of their sad fate he dedicated a stirring

elegy to their memory, in which he poured forth all his concentrated rage and grief; an elegy that betrays manifest echoes of his profound biblical studies, when he evokes the scattering of their bones, and craves that every city, from the sea to the Alps, may preserve a portion, that they may swear upon them in the face of high Heaven to avenge their martyrdom. He begs his countrymen not to be discouraged or to abandon themselves to tears or to complaints, but to act and to resolve even more firmly to be a free and a united people. But discouraged they were. This failure on the part of the Bandiera brothers to fulfil their aim depressed the easily downcast spirits of the Italians, more easily downcast in those days of tyranny and oppression than now in the days of their freedom. Levi did not, however, lose heart or acknowledge himself vanquished, he professed to be enamoured of Venice as a residence, and indeed the poetic charm of that sea-city held him in its magic thrall, but he also used this thralldom as a convenient shelter and a blind. Under cover of a careless life of worldly pleasure and love-making, with a certain dabbling in poetry and literature, he was in reality continuing his political propaganda. His poem on the death of the brothers Bandiera had of course been issued anonymously. It spread like wildfire through political circles, and electrified its readers. Needless to say its author was at once proscribed by the Austrian police, but they searched for him in vain, for they little suspected him to be the elegant youth who wandered about the Piazza San Marco, or was rowed by moonlight through Venetian canals, dreaming or enjoying himself with boon companions. It was while in Venice that Levi resumed his deeper philosophical and religious studies, and it was here that were written his three great poems that have reference to Judaism, *The Three Pilgrims*, *The Wandering Jew*, and *The Bible*, and that he sketched the first rough idea of his drama, *Il Profeta*. Here, too, he wrote that splendid *Intermezzo* in which we listen to the heart-beats of his patriotic soul, and which

resumes in itself the history of Italy, and was to see the light much later. In this poem Levi prophesies concerning Italy's future, and foretells with wonderful clearness in 1849 events that were to occur from 1860 to 1870.

The *Three Pilgrims* is a fine poem, of which the following is the central conception. Three pilgrims, by different paths, ascend the incline of a mountain. One has wreathed his brow with vines and roses, another is clad in sackcloth and beats his contrite breast. The third, alone and thoughtful, but serene, treads his path resolutely, embracing with his gaze the most distant horizon. These pilgrims are three civilizations, three religions. Each one seats himself beside a spring and pours forth a song. To the first—Greece—the universe appears a smile and an exultation, and he sings of the joy and the voluptuousness of life. To the second—Christianity—the earth is a vale of tears full of sterile wastes, his cult is Woe and his god is Death. The third, while he pushes his gaze to the most distant horizon, sings how human life is interwoven of laughter and tears tempered with wisdom, and how the spirit is no less holy than the body; this, too, is an offshoot of the eternal.

The "Wandering Jew" has been sung in many ages and under many diverse significations. Shelley, in *Queen Mab*, used him as the symbol of negation and blasphemy. Edgar Quinet, in his poetic drama, used him as adumbrating humanity. For Hamerling he represents hatred, rancour, and rage; others see in him the representation of remorse and doubt. But what does Ahasuerus mean to Israel who is the true Wandering Jew? Levi treats Ahasuerus as symbolic of his race, and condenses in his verse its struggles, aspirations, and martyrdoms of 3,000 years, showing forth the nobility, the invincible power of Hebrew thought, its pride of origin, its just disdain of all oppression, its imperishable faith in the future of its race as identified with the most splendid destinies that await mankind. The

following translation gives but a pallid reflection of the fire, the pathos of the original ¹.

THE WANDERING JEW.

Seek not what I am to know,
What my name is, never crave,
God records it, Earth and Woe,
It may radiate the grave,
If at last my tears' long flow
Should melt the stones to hear.

Wandering ever—I, forlorn,
Refuge seek for this poor frame.
Thinking, suffering;—Man, base-born,
Spurns my right, ignores my claim—
I pass his tortures, scorn
His piety and his jeers.

Wandering ever—storms and ire
Burst with fury on my brow,
Adam's curse I bore entire,
Wretched, yet too proud to bow;
Victim ever, on the pyre
I laved in grief each sin.

Midst the whirlwind raging round,
Vanished lands, seas disappeared,
Crumbled all, mere dust I found,
Empires, temples, shrines revered;
But immortal lived Thought bound
My heart's sad depths within.

From life's dawn that thought upgrew,
Ever present to my mind,
Vast, sublime, it shone and grew,
All to it,—a restless sun.
Glory o'er the Past it threw
And o'er the Future—Light.

Thought that rends Earth's mystic veil
Opens to me hidden things,
Doth illumine the future's trail,
March of races, fate of Kings.
Visions throng—I do not quail;
'Tis martyrdom—but might.

¹ Translated by Lady Sofia Rutherford.

Hear me, one most fatal day,
Never will its memory die,
Rose a mortal; he did say,
"Up, thy wish, thine aim is nigh;
Day breaks—chase the night away
And hail the brightening skies."

As on man who scoffs at woe,
Smiled I—in most sad disdain,
He died, but all lands did glow
With his life, his deeds and reign;
Other errors did upgrow
New altars—victims—lies.

But my path I followed still,
Wrapped me in my grief sublime,
Turned from groans of pain that thrill,
Tears of victims, cries of crime,
Through oppression and through ill,
Awaiting one great hour.

As when Abel slain by Cain,
Down was trod till, dead and low,
Blood then flowed in sea and plain,
So 'tis now—onward I go
The man of my delirium vain,
Was not the coming Power.

Longing for the Infinite
Moved me ever, spurs me now,
But the end has not dawned yet,
Hope unripe hangs on the bough,
Ages do I wait and fret
For that which comes not nigh.

Years to me are moments brief,
Small the Universe appears,
Deep in thought, immersed in grief,
Weighing tyrants with men's fears,
Sweep I Hope's harp for relief
And raise wild terror's cry.

Every suffering has been mine—
Outrage, insult, struggle, pain,
Strong in sovereign thought divine,
All I challenge, all disdain.
Foes will fail—not my faith's shrine,
No time has that upturn.

Seek not what I am to know,
 What my name is rests in gloom,
 God records it, Earth and Woe,
 But 'tis hidden from the Tomb;
 Torture me, contempt I show
 For pity as for scorn.

Such was the cry of challenge and scorn which the young poet threw into the face of his oppressors. A challenge as well as a programme, as is shown by the works he was still to issue. A worthy successor to this poem was:—

THE BIBLE.

“Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments. Keep therefore and do them, for this shall be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations.”—Deut. iv. 5, 6.

As to an ancient temple
 Whose vast proportions tower
 With summit inaccessible
 Among the stars of Heaven;
 While the resistless Ocean
 Of peoples and of cities
 Breaks at its feet in foam
 Work that a hundred ages
 Hallow; I bow to Thee.

From out thy mighty bosom
 Rise hymns sublime, and melodies
 Like to the Heavens singing
 Praises to their Creator;
 While at the sound, an Ecstasy,
 A trance, fills all my being
 With terror and with awe—
 I feel my proud heart thrilling
 With throbs of holy pride.

Oh! come, Thou high, beneficent
 Heritage of my fathers,
 Our country, altar, prophet!
 Thou art our all, Thou only
 Through doubt, through pain, through outrage,
 Through pangs of dissolution
 Wringing our tortured hearts;
 Come, open the rosy portals
 Of hope to us once more!

Nature, immense and splendid,
With force and life and glory
Fills all the Earth, the Heavens
With forms of beauty infinite;
But if man seek for wisdom,
For voice, or for direction
Amid her forms unresting,
The spirit flies before him
Hidden by fatal veil.

Like a broad flood the centuries
Bring up the newer ages;
Their children, lost and scattered,
Break on the rocks of history.
Awed by the roar unceasing,
Thought pauses, questions, listens;
Mute is the dark abyss.
Man gazes on the vortex;
No daylight shows the way.

Now, half-confused with Nature,
Victim of adverse forces,
Man half-unconscious ponders
The secret of creation.
Seduced by floating images
He seeks in silent musings
For liberty and truth,
But finds but arid beauty
That leaves him still alone.

Thou, noble, great, resistless,
Breaking the forms that bound Thee,
Bore up above creation
The liberating spirit;
Yet, always wrapped in silence,
Thou didst await the moment,
The signal from the Lord,
To speak the word, life-giving,
That burned within Thy heart.

Discouraged, weak, immovable,
Plunged deep in mournful musings,
With desperate wordless groanings
Groaned all the lost creation,
Like to a vampire gnawing;

To the sad hearts of victims
Clung care and bitter pain,
While drop by drop the life-blood
Was slowly drained away.

Then spakest Thou in thunder,
Thou shalt arise, O Solima !
Flinging at Rome defiance,
Shalt fall, but still unconquered
Shalt fight, though overpowered,
Till from thy smoking ashes
There falls a tiny stone,
Down goes the mighty fabric,
The eagle flies the dove.

Then spakest Thou in thunder,
"Tell me O Earth ! O Heaven !
O People, say what Caesar,
What hosts have shown more power ?"
Swift as the forkèd lightning,
Calling the lands, the ocean,
Didst pass from shore to shore
With strong new voice compelling
Wakening two worlds anew.

Here, soft as dew at morning,
The thirsty soil restoring ;
There, flashing like a scimitar,
All flaming and devouring,
Like dew on Calvary falling,
Flashing like flame at Medina ;
The crescent and the cross,
Before Thy glory heading,
With Thy pure radiance shine.

While in glowing vertex
Thy light goes on expanding,
Our hearts within are burning
With life more new, more noble ;
The ever-rolling ages
Repeat Thy word for ever.
All things before Thee lie—
The sun, the stars of Heaven,
Like dust beneath Thy feet.

In Thee, eternal, limitless,
The Earth is bound to Heaven;
The ages in immensity
Are one in Thine infinity;
Rapt by Thy power, the Spirit
Springs ever high and higher
Through care and grief and love,
Groans in mysterious ecstasy,
Exults in bitter pain.

Idylls of love and tenderness,
Home joys and pure affections,
Voices of Hope unconquered
By torture or by agony,
Austere and fruitful suffering,
Terror and doubt and faith,
Oh! for the whole Creation
A voice is found in Thee.

Like an inspired Sibyl
Thou thunderest in anger,
Tyre, Babylon, demolished,
Vanish with throne and altar;
Thou singest, Heaven lets open,
Mankind awakes to harmony
And holy truth and peace;
Like blessed springs descending
Thou fillest all the world.

Ah me! what countless miseries,
What tears all unregarded
Hast Thou consoled and softened
With gentle voice and holy!
How many hearts that struggle
With doubt, remorse, anxiety,
With all the woes of ages,
Dost Thou, on ample pinions,
Lift purified to Heaven!

Oh! come, Thou high beneficent
Heritage of my fathers;
Our country, altar, prophet,
Our life, our all, art Thou!
In doubt, in woe, in outrage,

In pangs of dissolution
That wring our tortured hearts,
Come ope the rosy portals
Of Hope to us once more.

Hidden in lurid caverns,
A mark for senseless fury,
How oft my fathers listened
To augury, shouts and curses
Invoking wrath on Judah,
To the eternal infamy
Of fierce delirious crowds,
Of noble kings and peoples
Thirsting for Israel's blood.

The wife, the pallid daughter,
Through nights of woe and terror
Have clung around the father
Moaning in agony;
While he bowed o'er Thy pages
Calm, mute in meditation
Rapt far from earthly things,
In silent hope intrepid,
Smiling, forgot his fears.

Thou, Zion, old and suffering
Victim of long oppression,
Sublime in woe and patience,
Witness for truth immortal!
Thou, with thy Bible only,
Of all men scorned and hated,
Wandering from shore to shore
Amid the cruel tempests
That sweep thine all away,

That precious freight from shipwreck
Didst keep inviolate,
Didst lift up unto Heaven.
It drew the eyes of all men.
What matter if the peoples
Denied the faith and freedom,
Asylum, pity, peace?—
Thy Bible is thy refuge,
With that thou hast all things.

Throughout the world rejected,
From every corner hunted,
Thy Book shall be thy banner,
Thy country and thy watchword
Into remotest regions.
Thy Bible shalt thou bear,
Hoping and waiting ever ;
The glory of Its triumphs
Has never ceased to glow.

Listen ! the world is rising,
Seeking, unquiet, thrilling,
Awakens the new Century
To new hopes and new visions.
Men hear upon the mountains
Strange and life-giving voices ;
Every soul seems to wait,
And from that Book the Signal
For the new day shall come.

Born with the Sun, It follows
His course throughout Creation ;
The Old is roused, transfigured,
The New gains life and vigour.
In thee shall meet all races,
As stars sought for their centre,
And when their Sun arose,
Peacefully round him circling,
Pursued their Heavenly way.

Besides the potent and profound historical intuition that resides in these poems, there is noteworthy a deep feeling for Nature which is rarely found in Italian poets, and which Levi no doubt derived from his Hebrew ancestors. For him, who tended toward a Pantheistic view of life, Nature is one vast entity which ever rises from step to step up to the Infinite, as he sings in his poem entitled *Aspiration*. If to thought he sometimes sacrifices form, this is almost a merit nowadays, when thought in poetry is too frequently subordinated to minute and pedantic research after metre and technical subtleties. His aim is to write poetry that shall provoke thought, that shall speak to the

soul, that shall awaken and create; in a word it may be said that his poetic art may be summed up in the celebrated line—

“Odio il verso che suona e non crea.”

And hand in hand with Levi's poetic life marched his political. When he was bewailing beside the Lido the sad fate of Zion and Italy in the spring of 1846 a ray of hope suddenly dawned upon the horizon. Pius the Ninth has ascended the pontifical throne, reversing the reactionary policy of his papal predecessor, and placing himself at the head of the Liberal movement. In a moment the new Pontiff became the most popular and beloved man in all Italy, cries of “Viva Pio Nono” rang through the whole peninsula. No wonder that Levi was carried away by the stream, making himself the mouthpiece of the hopes placed on the unlooked-for champion, in an ode addressed to Pius IX. He headed it with the lines, 1 Corinthians vi. 5, and Colossians iii. 2. This ode fell into the hands of Gino Capponi, the leader of the Tuscan liberals, who read it to his friend Niccolo Tommaseo, and the two resolved to show it to the Pope. Pius IX read the ode most graciously, and sent the author his thanks and apostolic blessing. It is more than probable that this Pope's milder attitude toward the Jews and the fact that shortly after the walls of the Roman Ghetto were razed was due to the impression made on him by this ode quite as much as to the reigning liberal current. This current also affected Charles Albert of Savoy, that Hamlet of monarchs, and caused him to grant the constitution which gave political equality to all his subjects, regardless of creed, a decree which caused David Levi to return to Piedmont in the hope that he could now defend the hopes and aspirations of Italy. He threw himself with ardour into journalism, and helped with his patrimony to found a number of journals destined to advocate the sacred cause of liberty. Meantime there dawned that year of high hope and grievous disappointment, the year 1848, noteworthy in the annals of Europe as the great year in which

the tide of freedom swept up from all sides with tempestuous strength, overturning thrones and altars in its course. The moment seemed favourable, and Lombardy and Venice took up the cry, hoping to shake off the detested Austrian yoke. Among the soldier volunteers that sprang into existence like magic from all parts of Italy was David Levi. Like Theodore Körner, he fought with sword and lyre. A rousing appeal to arms for freedom, hearth and home, called *L'Italiana*, written by him and set to music by Toroni, became the Marseillaise of the movement, and words and music ran like wildfire up and down the peninsula, and were sung and recited till Italy was free from Alps to Sea. It was in these days of glad expectancy that David Levi wrote his first book, *Patria ed Affetti*. Its preface is characteristic of the time in which it was written and of the poet's point of view. After greeting the dawn of the new era with enthusiasm, regarding it as the realization of his youthful dreams, his keen clear Hebrew vision is nevertheless not obscured by excitement that surges around him. That victory, even if delayed a while, must follow effort, that he admits, for if a nation is determined to succeed no might on earth can check it. But will its desire be realized exactly in the manner in which it has imagined it? For this much time will be required, a much longer time than the present generation believes, which imagines that Italy can be made in a day. For rarely or never is an idea realized in the most direct and straightforward way. Reality makes its demands, practical life requires its sacrifices, success must compromise, but nevertheless the ultimate aim must never be lost to view. So clear-sighted was this Tyrtaeus! If his countrymen had but had an equally lucid vision, matters would have gone better for the making of Italy, and much that is to-day deplored might never have ensued. But the Latin has not the Hebrew's cool calm outlook over events, he does not see beyond the immediate moment, he cannot judge calmly when his blood is up. Yet even Levi hoped that there

was staying power in the revolutionary movement initiated in those March days. Instead, as all the world knows, the Italian hopes were still for a time cruelly deluded, and political reaction drew its reins tighter than ever about their necks. The defeat of Novara, the flight of Carlo Alberto and Pius IX, the return of the French occupancy of Rome, all dashed the aspirations of young Italy. Fortunately, the young Victor Emanuel, who had now ascended the Piedmontese throne, did not revoke the liberal constitution granted by his predecessor, and hence the conspirators could continue freely to conspire within his domain. David Levi, in order to fire his countrymen to persist in the sacred cause, wrote a drama called the *Martyrs of Naples in 1799*, which was repeatedly played in Turin with great success, and which still holds the boards. Indeed, his persistence was indefatigable in the Italian cause, and his purse seemed as bottomless as his energy in helping all and when he could, founding clubs, periodicals, and aiding in every possible manner the Unionist propaganda. After the defeat of Custoza he proclaimed the necessity of re-opening hostilities, affirming that even a material defeat would have been a moral victory. He combated the Ministry then in power, inditing a pamphlet against it entitled the *Ministry of Opportunism*, a phrase which thirty years later and in another land was to be revived, and has now become a part of common speech to label a section of the world of politicians. He also tried to enter the Sardinian Parliament, but his election was frustrated by the reactionists and the Catholics. When the Crimean war broke out, he advocated the adhesion of Sardinia to the Allied cause, recognizing with statesmanlike insight the importance of this adhesion for Italy's ultimate international position. When the war of Liberation at last broke out in real earnest, in 1859, and Italy had found a powerful ally against Austria in France, Levi published his *Patria e Redenzione*, a collection of patriotic songs, which he dedicated to Garibaldi, the hero of that dawning

hour, in which in flaming words he incited the young men of the nation to fight their arch enemy and oppressor. One of these songs was sung always by Garibaldi's Redshirts as they marched to battle.

After the battle of Magenta, Levi was elected to sit in the first Italian Parliament by a Lombard constituency. In those days the Italian Parliament was a vastly different assembly from the apathetic, unpatriotic, and corrupt concern that it is to-day. That was the epoch when Italy still had great men to defend her, instead of selfish politicians. Levi seated himself among the Liberal party, known as the Left, and became a friend of Ratazzi's, but he was equally friendly with Cavour who led the Right wing, and that eminent statesmen confided to him more than one important secret mission. Levi became a member of the council for the unification of the Public Debt, and for the reorganization of the Chamber of Commerce. It was he who presented a project for the forming of Agrarian colonies, a project talked of but unrealized to this day, which he considered the only efficient means of combating brigandage. He was opposed to the Cavourian formula of "a free Church in a free State," advocating the rule of the State over the Churches. On this subject he published an important study entitled *Modern Unity and Catholic Unity*. He hotly combated the papal pretensions to temporal power, thereby increasing the hatred felt against him by the clerical party; he strove to show that the temporal power was as mischievous for the Church itself as for the State. He was a convinced opponent of the September Convention, according to which it was agreed that Rome should remain papal, and Florence be made the political capital of Italy. The whole truth is not even yet known about the September Convention, and it is therefore difficult to say whether Levi did right or not to oppose it. Some of the astuter minds of the times regarded it as a great step toward gaining Rome, and perhaps the fact that Rome ultimately was gained proves that they were right. However this may be, Levi's opposition

procured him many enemies and the loss of his seat as deputy, but that he was sincere in his opposition there can be no question. He hated all compromise, and to his mind this agreement was of that nature. "Compromise," he once wrote, "is the last word spoken by an age fundamentally weak and sceptical. Whosoever comprehends this word and is content to accept it, he will receive testimonials and honorary distinctions of all kinds from his contemporaries. For those who cannot, there only remains the future." Excluded from the Chamber, Levi once more returned to literary and journalistic labours. The leisure thus acquired enabled him to finish his *Profeta*, begun many years before in Venice, for it was not until 1877 that he was again elected to Parliament, and then he only sat there a short while, being so violently combated by the clerical party that he had to retire. To enumerate everything that Levi wrote in these years that followed would lead us too far, we can but name some of the most important, reserving quite the most important of all for the last. Noteworthy is his polemical pamphlet, *Democracy and Papism*, which deals with the Roman question, in which he opposes the two principles and elucidates the educational advantages offered by the State in opposition to those offered by the Church. He also published a work, half in prose and half in verse, a favourite method with him, modelled on the *Vita Nuova* and Giordani Bruno's *Eroici Furori*, called *Demeter*, in which he exposed his ideal of womanhood. The book was inspired by the true story of a poor woman from the Abruzzi whose children had been stolen from her, and who wandered on foot through the whole of Italy, and who even made her way to America, in her vain search for them. I reproduce a few pages that give some idea of Levi's originality of thought and method.

THE ORIGIN OF GODS.

The religious type or ideal of a people is not to be sought for so much in a more or less probable historical fact, as in the habits,

tendencies, or passions of that people. These are the true makers or modifiers of Gods (Numi). This is the truth, though not the actual and historical, certainly the psychological truth with regard to their origin. Now among the many gods who were born on or passed over the Italian soil, one of the types which has prevailed in every age and which has formed and crystallized in the bosom of our people was the feminine type, the woman-god. To seek this ideal in its origin, to note the various fantasies barely sketched or shadowed forth, to study that which prevailed and to follow it in its evolutions and transformations across the ages, might offer one of the most singular studies imaginable regarding the psychology and the religiosity of the Italian people. It is not true that the Italian is impervious to the religious sentiment, as has been said by those who infer the sterility of a whole people from that of their own minds. On the contrary, imaginative and artistic as the Italian is, he formed for himself in every age an ideal or archetype of virtue, beauty, strength, heroism, and purity which, corresponding to a civil or social need of the epoch, was elevated into a worship. However, the gods do not spring forth already adult and armed like Minerva from the brain of Jove. They are not instantaneously created by the breath of God, like Adam in Genesis. Their historic reality is always, not only problematical, but fabulous and mendacious. Yet there exists a reality still more potent and more concrete than historic fact. Like the productions of Nature, deities are formed slowly. They become, they are the result of intimate and profound labour of a society or of the tendencies, needs, and fancies of an age. The instincts, the tendencies of an epoch sow the first germs, and sketch confusedly and indistinctly the general outlines—the profile. Events, or rather some one event, at times a person, often an ordinary one, adumbrates some of these leading features and incarnates the general character. Tendency, fantasy, sentiment, wonder begin to animate it, to attract attention towards it. The people, that eternal artist, adorns it, embellishes it, surrounds it with the aureole of the marvellous. Then comes the wandering bard, the inspired sibyl, the poet, to gather up the facts, the legends scattered among the people, adding prestige to the supposed deity, hero, saviour. The philosopher, the sage employs himself in discovering and revealing in them, in their words, often confused, indeterminate, sibylline, a hidden mystery and wisdom. Meanwhile, the priest behind the curtains of the temple is studying, applying, and refashioning mysterious symbols, preparing for the worship which shall startle the mind and surprise the intellectual senses. And when the time is ready for the new god, and the old one no longer inspires either respect or terror, then the priest, arrayed in purple, advances to the threshold of the temple and cries

to the prostrate people, "Behold your new God." And the people, who already see in their mind's eye the image of their idol and feel its diffused breath pervading the air, fall down and worship.

He then goes on to show how the ideal of ancient Italy was the mother, for Italy, as Robert Browning has already said, is "a woman country," hence there was originated here the cultus of the Virgin, with all its after-effects of Mariolatry and the gross superstitions, such as that of the Immaculate Conception, which grouped themselves around it.

This work was followed by another, half prose and half poetry, called *Il Femminile Eterno*, bearing for its motto Goethe's words, "Das Ewig Weibliche zieht uns hinan." The poems sung the praises of Woman under the different names in which she has appeared in history, Venus in all her transformations, and the Shunamite, Rachel, Santa Teresa, and the Mater Dolorosa. In the prose section, which helps to elucidate and complete the poetical synthesis, Levi traces the history of Woman in the history of the civilizations of the peoples, and studies the reasons why the epic of Woman has not yet been completely written, although she plays so efficacious and continuous a part on the theatre of history as an important protagonist, and as the most potent energy in the midst of a nation, the creator of the family, the inspirer of legends, and the founder of all the arts of peace and culture. Well argued and thought out are the pages in which he compares the diverse action of man and woman on civilization, and the varied methods adopted by each to attain their ends. The book was not without its use in Italy, where in Levi's youth Eastern ideas still prevailed in regard to women, and where the emancipation of women from their slavish subjection to men has barely commenced.

His ideas on religion, as might be supposed, are marked by the same breadth of view which characterizes his political outlook. *Vita di Pensiero* and *Vita di Azione*

are a species of autobiography, also part prose and part verse, in which Levi has studied various phases of his individual development, and has given us his ideas concerning many social and religious questions. Indeed, the question of religion has interested him all his life, for he holds religion to be a necessary as well as a beneficent power in the existence of the individual as well as of the community. It was obvious that a man interested in religion could not fail to be interested in the most ancient, that of Egypt. On this theme Levi wrote a pamphlet, entitled *The Symbolism of Ancient Egypt and the Hebrew Ideas*. It is thus that he treats of the Sphinx :—

The Sphinx, with the man's head and the lion's body, is the most ancient and august of symbols. Over the ample trunk, white and clearly designed in the meridian sun, the sand of the desert steadily advances like a rising tide striving to envelop and cover it, but the head emerges colossal above the movement of the burning waves. The extended paws clasp a small temple, the nose is flattened, the proud arch of the eyebrows gives to the whole face a singular expression of majestic melancholy.

The signification which the form conveys, the lapidary texts sculptured on its flanks, declare that it personifies the young light which drives out the darkness and hails the sun in the fullness of his glory. The Sphinx has her face turned to the east, crowned with a disc of gold. She was called the sentinel of the sun, and when the greatest of stars rushed from the Arabian mountains, he struck the Sphinx's face, which blazed, confusing the human visage with the divine in an aureole flame ; then sounds of cymbals, flutes, and harps saluted the dawn in the temples of granite and alabaster, and the priests in white, mounting the Sphinx's back, raised their hymn to the sun. The Sphinx prefigured what science has now begun to affirm—the evolution of species, terrestrial origin, nature which develops from the heart of animality and conceives and forms man. The outstretched legs, the ferocious claws, the strong and virile body, which, crouching, sits like a bird on her eggs, half-buried in the marine sand whence all beings have emerged, gives an image of the immense forces of Nature which cause the head of a god to grow and arise from the bust of a lion. Darwin, after six thousand years with his theory of evolution of the struggle for life, of the selection of the fittest, says, "The fatality of the strongest gives the key to the enigma that the Sphinx has flung in among the peoples." But

the Egyptian Isis goes further, rises to conceptions which science has not yet pronounced, affirms the soul of the world, which, one in its essence, breathes into Nature, into genius, into species, into the individuals, the breath of life and the intellectual germs which make for perfection.

The Sphinx shivers, moves, goes forth from Egypt, and becomes the symbol which dominated all the ancient cults and civilizations. In Assyria two colossal wings spring from its sides, blazing like metal pouring from a fiery furnace; in Judea it changes into two cherubim with outspread wings, who cover their faces and protect the sacred ark. In the vision of Ezekiel it is one of the beasts with a face as a man, shining like a live coal which moves beneath the glory of the Eternal, and shows forth the four orders which guide the wheels of the world. In Phœnicia she appears with prominent and alluring breasts, with outstretched paws emerging from palpitating and voluptuous flesh, image of the eternal feminine, in her double nature, hellish and heavenly. At last she crosses the sea, rises gigantic before the walls of Thebes, and puts to Oedipus the fearful riddle which ends in her despair and death.

And now many centuries must pass before the enigma, flung before the world of old by the Sphinx, shall be gathered up and shall illuminate the intellect of the peoples, before the cloth that muffles her lips shall be loosed, and the veil that wraps her head around shall become Revelation and Science.

Levi deeply deplores the religious indifference of his Italian countrymen, and ascribes it, no doubt correctly, to the clerical party, who are so preoccupied with their desire to rule that they do not attend to duties that more properly pertain to their mission. But man is, above all, a moral entity, and his ethical desires must be gratified before all else, though perchance they are the most difficult to satisfy; but this alone makes him a man. Necessarily these interests led Levi to study the Jewish question. Happily, when he wrote his autobiography, this question seemed to have only a practical, juridic side. Persecution seemed banished from the civilized world for ever. When the disgusting flood-tide of Anti-Semitism and the agitation of the infamous Stoecker was raging in Germany—Italy, to her honour be it remarked, remained, and remains, untouched by the antediluvian movement—Levi in his deep ire and

disgust penned a book, called *Il Semitismo*, in which he admits with profound regret that the struggle which he deemed settled for ever was by no means defunct. As its motto he chose the words of St. Paul, Romans xi. 18. He points out how Anti-Semitism was, and is at all times, a forerunner of reaction portending the moral decay of a nation. Reaction ever begins with a Hep! Hep! against the Jews, the most industrious and intelligent class of the population. Hence Anti-Semitism results in damage to the State in which it is tolerated or protected, as though to prove the truth of the covenant made with Abraham, "Whosoever blesseth thee shall be blessed, and whosoever curseth thee shall be cursed." The ideas of which Israel is the standard-bearer are for Levi three-fold and simple, like all that is truly great. They are God, Law, and People. Out of the antagonism in which Israel stood to all the rest of the world, owing to these ideas, and the struggle that resulted therefrom, we learn to know all its history, from the most ancient to the most modern.

We have not space to follow in detail the ideas, closely packed and carefully argued, contained in this little volume, which merits translation and wide diffusion throughout Christendom and Judaism. So modern is it that Levi not only treats of the Christian persecution of the Jews, but he foresees a persecution arising from a new source, that of the Anarchists, who hate and persecute the Jews as the expression of all those principles of law and order, of religious sentiment as well as of commerce and industry, on which are based the weal of a State. In conclusion he points out how Israel's material history is ended, but its moral and intellectual history continues, its social and ethical mission is by no means finished. The book closes with the words of St. Paul, that Hebrew who was the true maker of Christianity, in his Epistle to the Romans, xi. 15, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be?"

In *Vita di Pensiero* are embodied many of Levi's first

and shortest poems. That entitled *The Crows of the Coliseum* is worth translating, but is too long for insertion here. A few lines, however, may give some idea of its strength and beauty. The translation can give but a faint shadow of the original, which is full of that wonderful answering of sound and sense that gives so great a charm to Italian verse.

I sat alone
 Upon a mass of stone,
 Forgotten by the Ages,
 Despite their rages,
 The Arch of Titus near,
 When hark! a sound I hear,
 A cry that sometimes seems almost a groan,
 Sometimes a sneer.

"Cra, cra, crae," the crows, the crow,
 Shrieking they go,
 Sweeping around
 The Coliseum proud
 With echoes rough and loud,
 And waking with harsh cry
 The rock Tarpeian high.
 "We were here, you and I,"
 They seem to croak,
 "Through all Rome's struggles, glories, and decay—
 The ages pass us by.
 Where Brutus spoke,
 Where the red sunlight saw the legions die,
 They all are gone;
 The crow, the king of all, is left alone."

I have reserved to the last mention of the three really great works which constitute a species of trilogy, where are traced the road that must be traversed by those main factors of human culture, Religion, Art, and Science, in order to help them to reach their goal. These are the *Life of Giordano Bruno*, a work which marks an epoch in the history of philosophic literature; the dramatic poem, *Il Profeta o la Passione di un Popolo*, in which are embodied his religious sentiments; and *La mente di Michael*

Angelo, the prophet-artist, who painted and carved in riddles, condemning in canvas and marble the false Christianity of the Middle Ages, and predicting the coming of that new and purer religion of which Giordano Bruno was the prophet, a religion that should have no rites, no personalities, no authormorphism, a religion of pure intellect, working upward on purely philosophic lines.

An interval of almost twenty years separated the first part of *Il Profeta*, *The Orient*, from the second part, *The Occident*, and there is as little real cohesion between them as between the first and second parts of Goethe's *Faust*, to which *Il Profeta* has been compared, as well as to the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus; and indeed it resembles these dramas in the vastness of its conception, the grandeur of the sentiment with which it deals. But in Levi's poem it is not one man who struggles against adverse fate or tries to arrive at truth; it is the life struggle of an idea, of a passionate craving for liberty and justice incarnated in a people, a race, which goes on from age to age amplifying its sphere of action as the ages revolve. The apostles of this idea are the Hebrew prophets, synthesized in the prophet of Israel's adversity, Jeremiah. In the fourteenth canto of the *Inferno*, Virgil tells Dante that in the island of Crete there dwells an ancient sage "who holds his shoulders turned towards Damietta, and looks at Rome as if it were his mirror." This old man, according to some commentators, adumbrates the genius of Time, behind whom lies the East, or the past, while before him stretches the Occident, or the future. This parable elucidates the character and the tendencies of Levi's prophet. Its theme is taken from Israel's past, and its scene of action is old Palestine, but the ideas, which are the ultimate goal at which its creator aims, refer to the future of Italy in the first place, and then to that of all mankind. The drama is preceded by a Prologue. A dead man called forth from his tomb in each successive century inquires concerning the dominant idea of each, asking, "What hour is it now on Earth?" And each age replies.

One tells him how man is the slave of the brute forces of Nature, and worships them in his fear ; one other narrates how the brute force of warriors predominates ; and a third, how the frauds of priests reign supreme, shielding lies under the cloak of truth. Each time the buried man falls back into his tomb, saying, "The hour is not yet come." At last there dawns an age in which the oppressed has shaken off his bonds and stands forth as a man, the age of the great avengement, but his struggles are vain, and he once more succumbs. Discouraged, the dead man sinks back into his tomb again, saying, "He thinks, he dares, he struggles still." The drama itself consists of five acts, in which all the history of humanity is passed in review through the mouth of its prophets. Renan has said that "prophetism has created the religion of the future and the religion of humanity," but Levi before Renan points out what prophetism really was as a humanitarian and civil institution. The prophet, despoiled of his theological and mystical aureole, was the tribune of the people, the journalist, taken in the highest sense of the word, and the propagator and diffuser of all new ideas, the reformer, the defender of the rights of the Hebrew nation, which Michelet has called "the only democracy of antiquity." The theories concerning prophetism, which Levi has exposed from the historical and rational point of view in his preface, are represented in the ardent and passionate action of the drama. The second and third acts constitute a poem on the philosophy of religion, in which all the human cults are passed in review and due justice is done to that of Israel. The fourth act, entitled *The Peoples*, presents us with a series of pictures of the antique peoples, with frequent allusions to modern nations. The last act, entitled *The Temple*, ends with the destruction of that edifice and the captivity of the children of Israel. Amid the plains appears Jeremiah, who weeps with his countrymen, but in the end addresses to them words of hope and encouragement, concluding with this speech, that finishes the drama :—

Go forth, O people,
 Sacred to thought, to labour and to sorrow,
 And through the centuries pursue thy way.
 God of Infinity, He is thy God,
 And measureless alike 'mid alien fanes,
 Along the sea and lands that thou shalt tread,
 Pilgrim of endless years, thy path shall be.
 The road is dark, is long and full of pain;
 Beside thee still shall go, at God's behest,
 Like to the fiery column, quenchless Hope.
 As winnowed grain is flung into the air,
 So, 'midst all peoples God shall scatter thee,
 And thou shall bear, as well as thine own griefs,
 The griefs and burdens of all other races.
 Peoples shall rise, shall shine, shall pass away,
 But thou, sacred to life, beside the graves
 Of all shall pass immortal, vaster far than time
 Or than this earth, no tomb can hold
 Thy thoughts immeasurable.

Sorrowful and grand,
 Thou to the rush confused of years to come,
 And in the wreck of peoples and of empires,
 Thou in all ages, living, speaking witness,
 Shalt say to all—"I am." And to the past
 The future thou shalt bind, and race to race,
 People to people, and the scattered limbs
 Of Adam drawing into thine own self,
 In thee, new Adam, one mankind shall grow
 Like unto God, and holy on the earth.
 Thou the reviving universe shalt fill
 With truth and peace.

In that day, wonder of centuries,
 All who behold thee shall exclaim, "Behold,
 The people who for ages were hewn down
 Upon a thousand altars, burnt on hundreds,
 Arising from the wrecks of shattered fanes
 Unhurt and pure."
 And now, Lord of the ages, all these tears,
 The tears of Israel, that o'er all the Earth
 Shall stream a quickening shower,
 Thou shalt accept as a propitiation for the rights.

The second part of this great epic consists of a dialogue
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between Emanuel, the prototype of prophetism and of the thinker, and Ahasuerus, the representative of humanity. Its scene of action and chief subject is modern Rome, the new Rome conquered by Italy. For Levi, the world has two centres of civilization, Zion and Rome. In the second part, which deals with the latter centre, he traces out the religious, artistic, and ethical movements of modern society. The erudition displayed in both sections of the great poem is immense, its diction magnificent, its aim high and noble. A few lines taken from the second part may give some idea of its spirit.

The wise, among the peoples of the past,
 Worshipped the mountain peaks. But if sublime,
 One on another, all the hills of Earth
 Were piled together in gigantic heaps,
 They would be but an atom, set against
 Thy Lord and King. They are but depths, not heights,
 Confronted with thy mind, that without rest
 Cries out within thee, with unmeasured breath,
 "Higher and higher yet!" They bowed down in the past
 To strange yet gentle beasts and the grey bear
 Of the dark wood. But thy soul cries aloud—
 "Aspire to life! to life!"
 Of all the peoples for triumphant truth,
 And for the eternal glory of thy Name,
 And then shall come the era, long desired,
 Of liberty, of justice, and of light.

Higher and higher ever mounts the keynote of the whole poem which also ably contrasts the struggles and passions endured by Israel during centuries with the brief passion suffered by Jesus.

Some critics have found fault with Levi's poetical style, reproaching him with lengthiness, with a tendency to declamation and rhetoric, and with a use of rhythms not suited to the Italian tongue. Such criticisms addressed to a great work that is dense with great thoughts and sublime aspirations, is hypercriticism indeed. Levi's aim is not to write poetry for poetry's sake, he does not belong to

the art for art school, he seeks only to propagate his ideas, to upraise a song full of hope and courage for struggling man, to help him to new life, strength, and happiness. Indeed the keynote words of all his writings are "Excelsior" and "Forward." The *Occident* was preceded by a sad preface, whose title alone suffices to indicate its contents, "The Italy we hoped for and the Italy we have." It contains the sad wail that has been echoed and re-echoed often since by those who spent their lives and strength and substance on Italy's behalf, grieved to their souls to see how little their hopes have been fulfilled, how the Italy of to-day has fallen into the hands of professional, self-seeking politicians, and a greedy and corrupt bureaucracy. A reaction, a new Risorgimento may come, but for the moment the outlook is sombre and discouraging, above all for those who expended themselves on the making of the land which has so grievously betrayed their high hopes.

Giordano Bruno had early attracted David Levi—

I was but a child, he says, when I accidentally heard Bruno's name and read a brief account of him; from that hour I seemed to see him, to know him. It seemed as though our spirits communed with each other, that they had been related since centuries. Is this elective affinity or intellectual atavism? Was it a mere delusion, or my fancy, that from my earliest youth I strove after sensation, heroism, and truth? I passed from poetry to philosophy, and then back again to poetry without finding rest. Surely it was Providence, or divine justice, or, to speak theologically, the finger of God, which destined me, the descendant of an old and noble race, which since 1800 years suffers from the absurd as well as impious charge of having killed a God, to become the agent of avenging justice, to refute the accusations of our accusers, and fling the same into their faces. It was the *lex talionis*, the historical law of retaliation.

And truly the Dominican monk's mental calibre might well attract a cultured Jew, for Giordano Bruno, like Levi, is at the same time an idealist and a realist. His ideas are rooted in the reality of created things, and from these he rises to speculation. It is the Jacob's ladder that rests with its feet upon the earth, but whose uppermost rungs

touch high Heaven. The affinity between the ultimate aims of Israel and Giordano Bruno are marked, and the end of this man's influence has come as little as the end of Israel's upon the nations, indeed in both cases it may be said to have barely begun.

A series of articles on Giordano Bruno were the first-fruits of Levi's attraction, then in his *Lyrical Intermezzo* Bruno is made from his scaffold to foretell the re-awakening and revival of Italy. Levi regards Bruno as the impersonation of the Italian conscience, the modern conscience as opposed to the perverted conscience of the Middle Ages, a man born before his time, a prophet great, not merely because of his great mind and his divining genius, but by the potency of character which made him the most eminent, the most enlightened and thoughtful of philosophers and reformers, in short, together with Michael Angelo, the most wonderful figure of that wonderful epoch, the Renaissance.

Giordano Bruno's works, full of cryptic allusions purposely veiled from the comprehension of the vulgar herd of his epoch, are lucidly explained and set forth by his biographer, who reveals him to us as *semper unum* in whatever he does, writes or thinks. Levi has entitled his great work on Giordano Bruno *The Religion of Thought*, and has divided it into two sections, the Man, and the Apostle and Martyr. The first part is entirely biographical and historical; the second doctrinal and philosophical. Levi spared no pains to make his work complete, visiting London, Oxford, Geneva, Paris, and Frankfort, for the purpose. In conclusion he points out how Italy should be proud of this son, in whose soul it should recognize, incandescent, the stamp of its own genius. Indeed, throughout Levi's book it is manifest that he uses Giordano Bruno for polemical ends, in order to raise the ethical thinking, the courage of his countrymen. Indeed, he openly admits this in a letter to me, in which he writes:—

I felt that after the temporal power had fallen it was needful to continue to battle against the spiritual, against that mean and lying

crowd with its harmful errors which is the plague-spot of the Latin world, and above all of Italy. I began my crusade in the name of Giordano Bruno, and after a ceaseless combat fought with open visor; for over twenty years I published my work on the great philosopher martyr, and thanks to me his statue now rises in a retaliating attitude on the spot on which he was burnt alive. To-day it is merely his statue which rises up, but the twentieth century will not have set before his spirit will have been diffused over the future Rome, endowing it with the spirit of the new religion of Thought and Science, of the *Dio Uno* and Infinite. After Science, Art, great and redeeming Art, after Dante and Bruno, the third of the Italian Titans, Michael Angelo. And I put my hand to the work *La Mente di Michael Angelo*. And the mystery that envelopes the masterpieces of this grandest of artists, who taught and graved rather than painted in his divine and cyclopean poem of the Sistine, whose meaning until now only a few adepts dared to reveal, I ventured to draw into the light of day, in order that Italy and the whole world might admire the doctrines hidden. "Sotto il velame dei dipinti strani," as Dante sings.

This work on Michael Angelo is almost better known in France than in Italy. A French translation was accepted by the Minister of Public Instruction, on account of its many new and original ideas, as a class-book, and in France it is still widely and deeply studied. Levi calls Michael Angelo the Florentine Sphinx, for according to him the works of Michael Angelo are cryptic like those of Giordano Bruno, and hide a profound allegorical significance. At the Court of Lorenzo il Magnifico Michael Angelo came in contact with the greatest spirits of the epoch, he was early inoculated with the leading ideas of the Renaissance, and he made it his life-task to clothe these ideas in beautiful forms, and thus pass them on to posterity.

What Dante had done by means of verse, Michael Angelo strove to do by means of painting and sculpture. According to Levi his first work, *The Combat of Hercules and the Centaurs*, already contains an allusion to the combat of intellect with brute force, truth with falsehood and superstition. The world-famed frescoes of the Sistine he regards as a connected philosophical poem which he elucidates with original and profound insight. For his aim was not

merely to write the life of this mighty genius, that had been done before, but to impress on his countrymen the grandeur and force of character, the secret lofty aspiration that dominated the existence and pervaded the whole work of the artist. Very different is his book from that of J. A. Symonds on the same theme, with its needlessly unclean suggestions. Michael Angelo's works, according to Levi, attest the remarkable independence of spirit he succeeded in preserving throughout his life; although he lived in courts and amid servile surroundings, his art never suffered corruption to bring it down to the level of the prevailing taste. His enlightened religious views would not bend, even to the demands of Pontiffs. "Michael Angelo," says Levi, "was the herald, the pioneer, the prophet, of the new Christianity of the true reformation, that was more truly advanced, more truly liberal than that of Luther, a reformation not even yet fully comprehended, and whose keynote was written by himself in one of the lunettes of the Sistine, 'Loqui prohibetur et tacere non possum.'" And of the new dogma, or rather thought, Michael Angelo strove to create the new Art and to initiate and formulate the symbolism of the future. He endeavoured to subjugate the old used-up formulas and to substitute in their place others which should be more virile, simple, and true, to combat conventionalism and to put in its place sincerity, frankness, and reality. Michael Angelo, according to Levi, was the incarnation of the humanist ideas of the Italian Renaissance. His religious ideals were those of Giordano Bruno and of the great thinkers of the age. In his works he incarnated the religious and social conception of the unity of the universe that made that period so glorious and remarkable. His Christ, his Virgin, are no divinities removed from Earth, they are simple mothers and babes. He painted the modern Christ, the Christ of reality, the man and teacher despoiled of all sacerdotal attributes and superstitious addenda. In the Biblical tales he eagerly sought after the inner meaning of what often seemed

childish fables. The central figure of the vault he declares to be Jonah, typical of the people escaping from the chains of tyranny, superstition, and prejudice, into the pure light of Science, which is the new revelation.

I have exceeded my space, but by no means my subject, which is so vast, embracing all aspirations, all religions, all ideals, that a volume would be required to do it justice. But I hope I have said enough to induce my readers to go to the fountain-head themselves and study the works of David Levi. It is shameful for Israel to confess that even in Italy, where he still lives and works indefatigably in the cause of his Jewish co-religionists and his Italian countrymen, his name and fame are almost unknown to the younger generation, and we fear that in England he is quite ignored. Nor are his labours ended. Though old, but happily not decrepit, he is still at work, combating for his high ideals. I cannot do better than close this article by allowing him to speak for himself. He writes to me, under date of February, 1897 :—

I am now occupied with keen interest in seeking the means to reprint the famous commentary on Dante by Gabriele Rossetti, and for this end I entered into correspondence with his son, William Rossetti, the brother of the famous poet and artist, Dante Gabriele Rossetti. The commentary of the father is the only one among the multitude of commentaries to the *Divina Commedia* which, dictated in a wide and liberal spirit, and based on vast erudition, has explained in its true significance the Sacred Poem, and thrown a penetrating light on the religious and political movements that agitated Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. But since it was an anti-papal movement, and of this Rossetti gives evident and irrefutable proof, his commentary was combated with every weapon by the Jesuits and neo-Catholics, who are still trying to suppress and disperse the copies. It is our duty to make it known, to diffuse and to propagate it, if only for the purpose of arousing Italy from her inertia, recalling her to her anti-papal and free traditions. Italy to-day is free politically, but from the spiritual point of view she is still enslaved by the priest, the Jesuit, and the Madonna. Such are her gods.

After a rapid review of his works and political action, he thus concludes :—

Such, my dear lady, in a few words, is the synthesis of my life. The thought that guided me, that illuminated me for over seventy years, which I developed amid unspeakable struggles, privations, pain, and obstacles, but throughout more than half a century of labour and discouragement, the thought that sustained me, was that of fulfilling a duty. The voice of old shook me as it shook Moses when it spoke from out of the burning bush on Mount Horeb, saying, "In hoc signo vinces." Meanwhile a new generation succeeds to mine, it marches on and will continue the battle in more compact files and in greater numbers; it advances in the name of Liberty, Labour, and Science, and I, who have one foot in the grave, do not halt, as do the anaemic and flaccid who bow their heads like pessimistic eunuchs, who deny our great mother Nature, Life, and God; I uprise out of the sepulchre that awaits me and attracts me, and cry,—Forward always and hope: to Science, Justice, and Truth, remains the last word.

HELEN ZIMMERN.

NOTE. Except where otherwise indicated, the translations in this article are by Miss MARY A. CRAIG.